

**Meeting:** Taught Academic Council

**Place:** CB 2.6

**Date and Time:** Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November, 12:15-14:05

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**Present:**

Ben Davies	Education Officer
Sarah Williment	Head of Academic Skills Resources
Tom Reid	Academic Skills Course Leader
Jenny Medland	HSS Students Experiences Officer

**Attending:**

Amy Young	Representation and Engagement Manager
Annika Theilgaard	Academic Representation Coordinator
David Woolley	Departmental Representation Coordinator
Suzanne Snook	Representation Administrator
Greg Croft	Representation Assistant (minutes)

**Apologies:**

*Available as an appendix to the minutes*

## 1. Register of Attendance

Attendance register available as an appendix to the minutes

## 2. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

There were no matters arising.

## 3. Notice of Any Other Business (A.O.B.)

There was no other business.

## 4. Report from the Students' Union Education Officer

The SU Education Officer welcomed reps to the second Academic Council. He asked about attendance at the Academic Reps Conference, and the majority of reps present raised their hands to indicate that they had attended. The Education Officer then proceeded to discuss several issues:

### 4.1 – SSLC Advice

The Education Officer asked how many of the reps in attendance had already attended an SSLC; the majority indicated that they had. They also indicated that most of the chairs in the SSLCs had been students. The Education Officer proceeded to give reps advice on how to approach SSLCs:

- **Try not to be nervous:** The Education Officer assured reps that they had been elected and trusted with their ability to fulfil their responsibilities, and that staff are there to help them.
- **Prepare well:** Reps were advised to read the agenda, prepare for discussions and ask for input from students.
- **Make sure you have your say:** Reps were encouraged to speak up in SSLCs and to ask questions.
- **Watch out for acronyms:** If unclear acronyms arise, reps were encouraged to ask for clarity.
- **Close the feedback loop:** Reps were asked to use the SSLC feedback template that had been sent to them and send this round to the rest of their cohort.

### 4.2 – Flow of Information

The Education Officer explained the different representation groups within the university and how they communicate with each other. He explained that academic reps communicate to faculty reps, who ultimately bring issues to senate. One rep asked how faculty reps would find out what happens in SSLCs, to which the Education Officer responded that faculty reps should be getting into contact with academic reps requesting feedback from their SSLCs.

### **4.3– SU Policy Proposals**

When asked, few reps raised their hands to indicate understanding of SU policy. The Education Officer explained that any student is able to influence SU policy by submitting proposals and getting them passed through an all-student vote. He informed reps that they should submit proposals by the following Monday in order to have them considered during the present policy round. The officer explained that SU officers will consider each proposal and decide whether to implement it right away, give advice to the proposer on how it could be made more feasible, or put the proposal to a student vote. He also noted that the decision regarding the final wording of the proposal would lie with the proposer and the officers. The officer informed reps that more information about this process could also be found online.

### **4.4 – Sprint Programme**

The SU Officer informed reps of the Sprint Programme, which was available for undergraduate women and those who identify as female. He explained that it was being delivered at Bath in partnership with a number of companies, and that it would take place over three and a half days. It was being delivered by external speaker Rachel Stevens – the first British woman to climb Mount Everest – and would cover using personal power and influence, managing time and building & maintaining image, among other topics. The Education Officer encouraged reps to get involved.

### **4.5 – TEF**

On being asked, most reps reported not to have heard of TEF. The Education Officer explained TEF and discussed his views on it. It was described as a framework being established by the government to measure the quality of teaching in higher education institutions. However, the officer argued that the metrics used to assess this were inappropriate. He noted that one of the metrics regards student earnings six months after graduating: he suggested that this is a poor indicator of teaching quality as it can be influenced by other factors such as personal wealth, background and the undertaking of a placement year. He also took issue with using dropout rate as a metric, as he believed the dropout rate to be poorly correlated with quality of teaching, with other factors such as mental health, family issues or simply having second thoughts about university being more important. The officer also stated that National Student Survey results are included as a metric, but noted that only a certain proportion of final year students fill this out, and thus results are not representative of the whole student body; he also stated that the National Student Survey does not measure adequacy of learning resources well and that it was never designed to measure teaching quality.

The Education Officer stated that university tuition fees are set to increase to £9250 in the upcoming academic year, and that it is undetermined whether that would apply to current students or not. He also discussed TEF 2, which would allow universities to charge different fees depending on their quality of teaching. He suggested that some students could be paying up to £12,000 by 2026. He recommended that reps read his blog for more information on this.



He stated that NCAFC would be holding a discussion at the university later that day, and that a group from the university would be attending a protest in London against tuition fee increases later in the month.

#### 4.6 – SU Top Ten Issues

The Education Officer discussed progress that has been made with two of the SU's Top Ten Issues:

- **Secure a physical expansion of the gym:** The officer noted that a large gym expansion project had been approved, and that it should be ready for the start of the 2017/18 academic year.
- **Make it easier for students to locate available study space:** The officer informed reps that a group had been set up by the Vice-Chancellor to help students find study space, and that the plan was for an app to be designed to facilitate this.

#### 4.7 – Feedback on Coursework

The SU Education Officer noted that another Top Ten Issue involves ensuring that there are minimum standards for assessment feedback. He asked reps what they would want to see in feedback. The following suggestions were given:

- A rep suggested that comments are more helpful than number ratings, and that comments on what they should change for next time would be particularly helpful.
- Another rep stated that for some of their assessments the marking criteria would be appended to the original assessment, and that relevant parts of the criteria would be circled in reference to comments. The rep found this to be very useful.
- It was suggested that for mistakes which many students make, generic feedback sheets that would be available for everyone to view would be useful.
- Reps from the maths department stated that they often receive just a mark as feedback, with no comments. They also stated that exam feedback is very rare; the Education Officer responded by saying that this often depended on the lecturer.
- A rep stated that in their SSLC they had brought up that they want feedback to be as detailed as it was before the feedback system became more internet-based.

The Education Officer noted the current three-week deadline for lecturers, and asked reps if they would want this to be shorter, or if they would want it to be extended to allow for more detailed feedback. Students stated that they are generally content with the three-week deadline, but noted that for labs they

often get a new piece of coursework each week and it would be helpful to have feedback from the previous assignment before they start writing the new one. Another rep noted that it is useful to receive immediate feedback after presentations.

#### **4.8 – SSLC Feedback**

The Education Officer asked reps how their experiences at SSLCs were, and whether there were any issues. One rep discussed an issue they had with joint maths/economics reps not being invited to the SSLC, but they now knew this for next time. Pharmacy and pharmacology students stated that they were pushing for lecturers to use Panopto, but that the department was very resistant and dismissed these suggestions; maths reps said they had similar issues. The Education Officer stated that Panopto was being made easier to use from the 2017/18 academic year. The Education Officer also said they would share a Google Doc which would be sent on Facebook to allow reps to record any issues or good practice from their SSLCs.

**ACTION: Education Officer to share SSLC Google Doc on Academic Rep Facebook group**

### **5 Academic Skills Centre**

#### **5.1 – Talk by Academic Skills Course Leader**

Academic Skills Course Leader Tom Reid spoke to reps about the support offered by the Academic Skills Centre. He informed reps that academic skills programmes are designed to help students with skills such as academic writing, reading, listening and note-taking. He discussed the general 10-week courses which the centre runs, noting that they are personalised and help on Wednesday afternoons and evenings. He also noted the 2-3-week sessions that they hold on topics such as critical writing and presentation skills. He also told reps about the Writing Centre: a place where students can go to see a tutor for either 20 or 50 minutes to get help with any writing issues. He went on to discuss 'write bites' to provide students assistance with specific areas of writing, as well as their one-off skills workshops which they run throughout the semester. Finally, he noted the discipline-specific courses which are embedded within departments.

#### **5.2 - Talk by Head of Academic Skills Resources**

Head of Academic Skills Resources Sarah Williment spoke to reps about the cross-institutional work she is doing regarding skills. She noted a large skills review had been conducted at the university with numerous focus groups, and that they found that while they offered a wealth of skills resources, these resources are not marketed or communicated well. She stated that to address this, the university is creating an online skills portal to incorporate all of the university's skills resources into one place. She showed the webpage to the attendees and explained that the new layout and resources were in the early stages of being developed. She asked reps to help get students to this page, and to volunteer for focus groups which would be advertised later in the month.



## **6 Student Learning Associates Project**

HSS Student Experiences Officer Jenny Medland next spoke to the attendees. She stated that she is coordinating the Student Learning Associates (SLA) programme. She informed reps that SLA allowed students to contribute and develop ideas which they think would improve learning and teaching at Bath, mentioning previous successful SLA ideas such as the Language Café. She informed the group that they would receive support and funding to develop their ideas. She told students that they could apply through the SLA website and that, while applications do not close until January, they were accepted on a rolling basis so anyone interested was advised to apply as soon as they are able.

## **7 Any Other Business**

The Education Officer informed the group that new microwaves were being ordered for the SU, and that there would be four available downstairs and two upstairs.

The officer stated that Pro-Vice-Chancellor Peter Lambert would be speaking at the next meeting, and he asked reps to prepare questions.

The Education Officer asked reps to wear their academic reps hoodies for the next meeting.

**Next Meeting: Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December, 12:15-14:05, 3WN 3.7**